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Mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the United Nations system was requested to mainstream the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development throughout its work. The three progress reports submitted since then highlighted that mainstreaming the three dimensions ultimately consisted of harnessing synergies and created opportunities that advanced sustainable development through the policies and programmes of the United Nations and averted unintended or conflicting impacts, priorities and outcomes. The reports have stimulated further exchange of information and dialogue within the United Nations system on how entities are optimizing their work according to principles of integration, including breaking silos and enhancing horizontal coordination and coordination across sectors. In the wake of such discussions, entities have sought to use tools, such as strategic plans, as core instruments that drive change throughout the United Nations system. There have also been accelerated efforts to marshal existing tools and resources, such as evaluation functions and inter-agency coordination mechanisms, to examine activities and programming that affect support at the country level, including through the lens of lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals.

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Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the present report explores how the efforts of the United Nations system to effectively mainstream the economic, social and environmental dimensions have acquired new urgency as a means to assist Member States in the implementation of this transformative agenda. The report examines mainstreaming with the objective of integrating activities and policies relating to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, which are interlinked and indivisible and must be pursued as whole.

The report provides an update on the milestones reported by United Nations system entities and showcases how the system is coordinating around a select group of areas, specifically: (a) water as a nexus for integration, through the UN-Water case study; (b) contributions to the New Urban Agenda as a United Nations system policy-level response; and (c) the development-humanitarian nexus as an emerging frontier for cross-disciplinary system-wide integration. The report further examines accelerated efforts to translate normative work into national strategies and to support the new universal development agenda at the country level. Lastly, the report presents conclusions and provides a set of recommendations.

I. Introduction

1. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, Heads of State and Government renewed the global commitment to sustainable development and outlined a broad vision that identifies poverty eradication as the greatest challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for achieving sustainable development. Member States agreed that, in order to accomplish that vision, sustainable development should be mainstreamed at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their fundamental interlinkages.

2. Since the holding of the Conference, Member States have stressed the importance of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system approaching their respective mandates and activities from an integrated perspective that effectively balances the three dimensions of sustainable development. Member States reiterated that call in 2015 by inviting the Secretary-General to continue to report to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on progress made in that regard, including for the consideration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The present report was prepared pursuant to that request.

3. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see General Assembly resolution 70/1), efforts of the United Nations system to effectively mainstream the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development have acquired new urgency as a means to assist Member States in the implementation of this transformative agenda. It will now be useful to focus on mainstreaming, with the objective of integrating activities and policies relating to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, which are interlinked and indivisible and must be pursued as a whole.

4. Consistent with the trends highlighted in the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/70/75-E/2015/55), the Sustainable Development Goals at the core of the 2030 Agenda provide significant momentum for institutional adaptation and change. Because of their strategic interlinkages, the Sustainable Development Goals and targets provide new impetus to the acceleration of the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions into the policies and actions of all development actors, including the United Nations system, as was stated in paragraph 88 of the 2030 Agenda: "We also stress the importance of system-wide strategic planning, implementation and reporting in order to ensure coherent and integrated support to the implementation of the new Agenda by the United Nations development system. The relevant governing bodies should take action to review such support to implementation and to report on progress and obstacles."

5. The present report continues to build on the previous reports of the Secretary-General (A/70/75-E/2015/55, A/69/79-E/2014/66 and A/68/79-E/2013/69), which have stimulated further exchange of information and dialogue within the United Nations system on how entities are optimizing their work according to principles of integration, including breaking silos and enhancing horizontal coordination and coordination across sectors. In the wake of such discussions, entities have sought to use tools, such as strategic plans, as core instruments that drive change throughout the United Nations system. There have also been accelerated efforts to marshal existing tools and resources, such as evaluation functions and inter-agency

coordination mechanisms, to examine activities and programming that affect support at the country level, including through the lens of lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals.

6. As the 2030 Agenda places renewed emphasis on addressing countries in special situations, the United Nations system has been providing integrated support to the implementation of programmes of action for the least developed countries, for landlocked developing countries and for small island developing States in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.[1]

7. Intergovernmental guidance is the foundation for the further integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development into the work of the United Nations system. It is stated in the 2030 Agenda that the high-level political forum under the auspices of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council will play the central role in overseeing follow-up and review at the global level. Thematic reviews of progress, including on cross-cutting issues, will also be held by the forum and buttressed by the work of the functional and regional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, reflecting the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals and the interlinkages between them. The reviews will engage all relevant stakeholders and, where possible, feed into and be aligned with the cycle of the high-level political forum.

II. Updates and milestones reported by United Nations system entities

8. In addition to the Sustainable Development Goals, the year 2015 was marked by a series of far-reaching global agreements, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Together, those agreements usher in transformative change processes that will underpin the implementation of the broader 2030 Agenda. International development institutions need to direct their work at all levels towards supporting implementation.

9. Since the operationalization of the 2030 Agenda, a number of preparatory steps taken by the United Nations system to align its support for the new development agenda at all levels have now come to fruition.

10. Over the past 12 months, the United Nations system, in the context of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and its subsidiary bodies, has focused its efforts on strengthening coherence and coordination in the system's efforts to transition to the 2030 Agenda.

11. The High-level Committee on Programmes is developing and has overseen the initiation of several system-wide initiatives on issue areas for which integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development is of particular relevance.

12. For instance, the Committee is holding consultations on a shared framework of action to support Member States in reducing inequalities as a core driver for

[1] These include the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Entities are determined that combating inequalities and discrimination should remain at the forefront of leaving no one behind and ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality in a healthy environment.

13. The Committee has also enhanced its efforts to coordinate and foster an integrated response by the United Nations system to climate change. A joint publication, entitled "How the United Nations system supports ambitious action on climate change", was made available at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to demonstrate how the diverse United Nations system entities are working together to support climate action, for example, through such initiatives as the Global Framework for Climate Services[2] or the One UN Climate Change Learning Partnership, and to put these activities into the broader context of sustainable development. The Committee also developed common principles to guide United Nations system entities in delivering coordinated and integrated support to Member States on climate change, for endorsement by CEB.

14. The Committee has also agreed on a revised version of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, entitled "Towards a risk-informed and integrated approach to sustainable development". Under the leadership of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the revised Plan of Action, once endorsed by CEB, will strengthen coherence and mutual reinforcement of the resilience-building efforts of the United Nations system in support of a risk-informed and integrated approach to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, in line with the Office's recent work on promoting coherent and integrated approaches to implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the 2030 Agenda.

15. The United Nations Development Group is developing tools, guidelines and methodologies to assist United Nations country teams in their work to support the efforts of Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda at the country level. In this regard, support resources are being mobilized under the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support strategy common approach. It is also working on a new set of guidelines for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework that seek to align the programmatic interventions of United Nations country teams with the requirements of the 2030 Agenda to ensure that the Development Assistance Frameworks are effective in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level and to provide a framework for coherent support across the development, humanitarian, human rights and peacebuilding agendas of the United Nations.

16. Given the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda, it will be important to encourage greater cooperation between the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the rest of the United Nations system, bearing in mind the specific mandate of each organization. In addition to activities carried out under the umbrella of CEB, various United Nations system entities have taken action to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within their respective mandates.

[2] The Global Framework for Climate Services is a multi-stakeholder initiative to enable society to better manage the risks and opportunities arising from climate variability and change, especially those who are most vulnerable to such risks. More information is available from http://www.gfcs-climate.org/.

17. In the previous three reports of the Secretary-General, the framework for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system was identified as a further entry point for integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development into the work of the United Nations system. The framework provides a basic architecture for integrating environmental and social sustainability measures at three levels: (a) internal strategies and policies; (b) operational activities, by means of programmes and projects; and (c) administrative decisions, such as those on facilities management. The framework was endorsed in September 2012 by the Environment Management Group, the United Nations inter-agency coordination body on environmental issues.

18. Throughout 2015, work to promote the implementation of the framework continued through pilot projects carried out by volunteering United Nations system entities. The objective of the projects was to share lessons learned, improve understanding of the practical implications of the framework and improve the framework and the related guide that was published in 2014 to serve as a diagnostic review tool for entities that were about to start or enhance their integration of sustainability measures into operations, policy work and programmatic activities.

19. Seven volunteering entities with diverse mandates (the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization) participated in a pilot process to test the utility of the guide to the framework and the extent to which the minimum essential building blocks outlined in the framework are understood and are being considered in practice. The United Nations Development Programme was part of the pilot support team on sharing experiences and lessons learned. The pilot process was completed in December 2015, having resulted in individually designed approaches that would further enhance sustainability measures within organizations and a synthesis report summarizing the outcome and lessons learned of the pilot exercise.

20. The process revealed a need for United Nations system entities to accelerate efforts in the area of environmental and social sustainability as a means to support Member States in their implementation of sustainable development.

21. Initiatives to address facilities and operations management are also in place under the purview of the Environment Management Group, and it is also recognized that policy coherence with regard to the application of environmental and social standards and safeguards at the country level needs to be further strengthened.

22. In summary, the pilot exercise indicated a strong willingness on the part of United Nations system entities to learn from experiences across the United Nations system that strengthen policy coherence, harmonization and shared learning, while at the same time an acknowledgement that entities need to have tailored approaches to implementing the framework.

23. Going forward, strengthening and improving the framework will continue to be the basis for a common approach to environmental and social sustainability, including the implications for the 2030 Agenda, on the basis of the lessons learned.

III. Water as a nexus of integration: the UN-Water case study

24. In the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex), it was recognized that water is at the core of sustainable development. Three years later, in September 2015, that sentiment was well reflected in the 2030 Agenda through Sustainable Development Goal 6, a universal goal for water and sanitation. Recognition of the prominence of water issues in the 2030 Agenda is significant. The role of water in the Millennium Development Goals was limited to access to water and sanitation. The 2030 Agenda now recognizes the comprehensive and interlinked role of water, demonstrating the connections within the area of water and sanitation and how these underpin other areas such as health, food, energy, elimination of poverty, economic productivity, equity and access to education.

25. Water and sanitation are key enabling factors for sustainable development, demonstrating interdependencies with other goals. At the same time, the lack of sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation also represents a key limiting factor to the implementation of other goals. For example, energy and food security (Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 7), are directly dependent on the availability of freshwater resources. Increasing food and energy production directly contributes to the increased generation of wastewater, which contributes to freshwater pollution, which in turn has potential negative impacts on ecosystems (threatening the achievement of, for instance, Goals 3, 12 and 14).

26. To better understand the food-water-energy-ecosystems nexus and other water and sanitation interdependencies across the 2030 Agenda, such as those between water, health, poverty and inequalities, and the potential trade-offs and synergies, in conjunction with other goals, the United Nations system has strived over the past year to enhance its interpretation of the nexus and apply it in practice. Although some entities have embraced a strong conceptual understanding of the nexus, implementation at the community level has been more challenging. UN-Water is producing a new analytical brief, due for release in 2016, which aims to be of direct use to countries in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda.[3]

27. UN-Water, the United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism for all freshwater-related issues, including sanitation, comprises 31 agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system as its members and 39 international organizations, primarily from the private sector and civil society, as its partners.

28. By tying together and building on the mandates of many organizations, UN-Water serves as a platform to address the interconnected nature of water and simultaneously works to maximize system-wide coordinated action and coherence in order to help Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda and other water-related international goals and commitments.

29. Building on technical and substantive support provided by UN-Water for the elaboration of the Sustainable Development Goals and their indicators, a new inter-agency global monitoring initiative, GEMI, has recently been formed under the auspices of UN-Water. The initiative brings together an array of existing global monitoring mechanisms to form a coherent global monitoring and reporting

[3] See http://www.unwater.org/fileadmin/user_upload/worldwaterday2015/docs/2_SDG6-Interlinkages%201and2.pdf.

framework for water and sanitation in the 2030 Agenda.[4] A case study of the water-energy-food nexus is provided in box 1 below.

Box 1
The water-energy-food nexus

The water-energy-food nexus approach is being promoted and utilized by many entities of the United Nations system to manage the intensifying conflicts relating to natural resources, such as land, water and energy, to identify trade-offs and to build on synergies between different resource users.

In the Arab region, the approach is being implemented by examining the stressors, constraints and strong interdependencies that characterize the relationships between these three sectors within the regional context. This has been formally supported through an intergovernmental regional initiative on the nexus between water, energy and food security, which was adopted under the auspices of the League of Arab States and is being supported by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and other partners.

The advantage of applying a nexus analytical framework to understand these complex relationships is that it can be applied to various scales of analysis and can accommodate consideration of the varying natural resources endowments and different production and consumption patterns that exist among Arab States. This can facilitate the examination of the bilateral, trilateral and iterative relationships that characterize complex challenges that stymie water, energy and food security in the Arab region, such as shared water resources management, decision-making relating to the energy mix and energy efficiency in Arab countries, and national efforts to achieve food security in the face of water scarcity, land degradation and development objectives.

Through the nexus approach, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations encourages a broader view of the water-food-environment nexus beyond freshwater resources that encompasses the integration issues of food production, social and economic development and environment relating to all types of water: fresh, brackish and marine. This is prompted by the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals and Aichi Biodiversity Targets that relate to the marine and brackish water domains and the importance of fisheries and aquaculture for food production in these waters, as well as inland freshwater resources.

[4] See http://www.unwater.org/sdgs/en.

The nexus approach has been applied in the Red River basin in Viet Nam, where water is scarce and competition between the energy and agricultural sectors is increasing. The approach has been used in such countries as China, India and Pakistan to attempt to solve problems caused by the pumping of groundwater, which has enabled an understanding of the implications of groundwater pumps on the water, energy and food systems and broadened the scope of possible interventions.

IV. Building an integrated agenda for sustainable cities and human settlements: shaping smart and sustainable cities

30. Key performance indicators for smart and sustainable cities have been developed jointly by the Economic Commission for Europe, the Environment Agency of Austria and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) using a multi-stakeholder participatory approach. The "United Smart Cities" project will develop smart standards and prepare sustainable city profiles. The indicators are the first of their kind to assess cities for both their smartness and sustainability, while facilitating integrated city planning. Seventy-two indicators (core and additional) are listed and grouped under the areas of the economy, the environment, and society and culture. The indicators will serve as a tool for evaluating cities and supporting them in setting sustainable development priorities, designing and implementing concrete actions and engaging multiple stakeholders. They will also contribute to the monitoring of the implementation of city-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets. The key indicators are expected to be approved by ITU Study Group 5, on the environment, at its meeting in October 2016.

31. ITU is piloting the key performance indicators in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Singapore to assess the efficiency and sustainability of the urban operations of the two cities. The two-year pilot projects will help in evaluating the feasibility of the indicators and contribute to their international standardization.

V. The development-humanitarian nexus

32. The 2030 Agenda demands that the pillars of development, human rights, humanitarian assistance and peace and security be drawn together in a comprehensive forward-looking strategy that seeks to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. As such, it serves as a catalyst for the United Nations system to move towards new, more holistic and integrated approaches that mobilize resources coherently across all the pillars of the Organization's mandate under the Charter of the United Nations.

33. There can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development. In terms of the development-humanitarian nexus, the achievement of sustainable development has, in the past, been largely contingent on a sequential model, by which immediate humanitarian relief is followed by a transition to longer-term development support. The commitment to the core principle of inclusiveness challenges the international community to move beyond a

focus on meeting immediate needs and to instead invest in enabling solutions that, over the medium- and long-term, lead to improved, sustainable and resilient outcomes in the lives and livelihoods of affected populations, including displaced and conflict-affected populations.

34. However, experience demonstrates that in reality humanitarian crises are increasingly protracted, recurring and complex. The average length of displacement is now 17 years, and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons is at a historic low. In such contexts, humanitarian relief has involved the provision of basic socioeconomic services to affected people year after year without an end in sight, despite the short-term and life-saving nature of humanitarian assistance. This leads to humanitarian activities often lasting more than a decade, but funded by yearly humanitarian appeals, without a long-term vision for reducing needs or more sustainable approaches for providing basic services and building the resilience of national institutions, local communities and affected people. Furthermore, the United Nations system is often hampered by fragmentation and silos, either institutional or based on the above-mentioned pillars, which betray the less-than-linear paths linking peace, relief and development and further exacerbate the challenge of addressing multifaceted and long-term sustainable development.

35. In the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit and other pivotal events to be held in 2016, a number of United Nations entities have been working together to develop innovative thinking on joint solutions to protracted displacement. In December 2015, a think piece entitled "Addressing protracted displacement: a framework for development-humanitarian cooperation" was developed with the support of the New York University Centre on International Cooperation. It builds on the experience of the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in implementing the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. The framework entails a new approach to strategic planning, increased reliance on localized solutions, a new way of financing and changes to policy and legislative frameworks.

36. A new approach to crisis risk management should stress the importance of system-wide tools and approaches that enhance strategic and policy coherence for prevention and incentivize predictable, timely and flexible financing, integrated multi-year planning and empowered leadership and effective decision-making in pursuit of collective outcomes.

37. Likewise, it is necessary to precipitate a fundamental shift from traditional approaches to assisting populations living in protracted displacement to a model that integrates multi-year humanitarian and development strategic planning and provides adequate resourcing of well-designed and executed livelihood programmes that address the needs of both host and displaced populations. Sustainable solutions will require greater access for displaced populations to quality employment, education and vocational training opportunities, as well as national social protection systems. It will require responses to displacement through a resilience-based approach and investment in addressing root causes of displacement whenever possible and leveraging possible positive economic impacts of displacement for local economies.

38. Through a deeper collective understanding of the drivers of shocks and crises and a willingness to embrace tools and approaches that support cross-pillar interconnectivity at the normative, programmatic, financial and analytical levels, the United Nations must develop coordinated risk-based analysis, multi-year programming and system-wide crisis risk management. Practitioners in the

humanitarian field would need to change their definition of success as well, by observing contributions to and interlinkages with the achievement of the 2030 Agenda at all levels and understanding that reductions in dependency on and overall need for humanitarian assistance at the country level are as important as the delivery of additional assistance.

39. Harmonized managerial practices across the development and humanitarian pillars would also serve as key enablers in the pursuit of an integrated approach. Ongoing efforts and mechanisms that support system-wide mobility across functions and pillars and the cross-fertilization of skills to amalgamate specializations, expertise and training opportunities across the entire system represent essential operational building blocks for establishing a global workforce for the achievement of peace, security and sustainable development and the promotion and protection of human rights.

40. The United Nations system must better conceptualize a balanced integration of State-building and peacebuilding priorities in the short, medium and long term and support solutions to challenges at the three levels. Conflict-sensitive analysis must include both short- and long-term strategies to respond to institutional deficits, which will generate support and trust for political settlements. In the immediate aftermath of conflicts and crises, it is essential that people feel their core needs are met and basic services are delivered. This can entail a wide array of cross-sectoral activities ranging from the promotion of inclusive growth to ensuring access to electricity and water and a fair distribution of goods. Tackling malnutrition at an early age, restoring primary and secondary schools to their full functionality and providing emergency employment through self-employment or small viable enterprises with targeted provisions for youth, women and internally displaced persons have demonstrated potential in signalling not only positive change, but also people's trust and hope for a swift return to normalcy.

41. To strengthen the potential for national law and policy actions to protect displaced persons, minimize dependency, increase self-reliance and foster better integration requires the firm placement of national Governments and local communities at the head of the response. In that regard, it is crucial that sustainable development actors begin to integrate the issue of displacement into national development plans; ensure access to local markets, livelihoods and the pursuit of productive and taxable economic activities; provide legal and social protections with special consideration to the vulnerabilities faced by women and children; and ensure mechanisms for transparency in the use of funds and inclusive decision-making. The success of such a new model rests on the collective commitment of Member States to operationalizing it, with the support of the United Nations system. For the United Nations system and other development actors, resilience-based solutions must be systematically integrated into workplans from the outset of crises, and assessment and planning must be approached jointly, with a view to achieving shared outcomes, and be underpinned by predictable and flexible responses and financing modalities.

42. In the area of strengthening the integration of humanitarian assistance with balanced and multidimensional sustainable development activities, many United Nations system entities have been proactive in addressing root causes of risks and crises and in focusing on prevention. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations uses its technical expertise in the area of agriculture and food security to strengthen the capacity of Governments and their partners to respond to crises with a perspective on the transition from recovery to sustainable development. This is an integral part of effective strategic planning in a development-humanitarian context and ensures that the resources needed to complete the transition to sustainable development are understood to the extent possible from the outset of an emergency response.

43. Regional-level programming is seen as an enabler for progress at both the regional and the national level in the attainment of sustainable development in a post-conflict setting. Such programming builds on converging regional priorities, is based on the bringing together of humanitarian planning and wider developmental and Sustainable Development Goal priorities and should underline any future programming in the region in post-conflict settings. A case study of a more sustainable solution in Uganda is provided in box 2 below.

Box 2
Case study for a more sustainable solution in Uganda

In Uganda, UNHCR and WFP have worked together with the Government to initiate a project to improve agriculture-based livelihood opportunities in refugee and host communities. The objective of the joint project is to enhance resilience through targeted investments in the value chain that result in improved household and community nutrition and food security, access to markets, increased income and improved access to essential services. The progressive and enabling refugee policies of the Government of Uganda, notably the allocation of agricultural land, the right to work, freedom of movement and access to basic services, provide refugee populations with pivotal opportunities to meaningfully improve their socioeconomic well-being.

With land provided by the Government, refugees in Uganda are now being supported with training in post-harvest handling and storage. Non-farming activities are focused on income generation and skills training in economically viable fields, such as trade and transportation. In carrying out these activities, UNHCR and WFP are working in an integrated manner and using an inclusive approach in refugee-hosting communities across Uganda. Together with the Government of Uganda, UNHCR and WFP are contributing to enabling and developing sustainable and inclusive community-based socioeconomic and capital growth, self-reliance and resilience. Improved intercommunal relations and a more favourable protection environment represent another set of key positive outcomes in fragile refugee-hosting communities. Over time, these strategic, adequate and sustained investments in the socioeconomic and environmental sectors are expected to lead to reduced humanitarian needs and support.

VI. Translating normative guidance into country strategies

44. A number of countries have already undertaken efforts, held consultations and taken steps towards aligning national development strategies with the 2030 Agenda. There is a strong expectation that the United Nations will adjust its policy advice and technical assistance to help countries to direct national development efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

45. The United Nations Development Group has adopted a common approach for effective and coherent implementation support to countries, the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support strategy, paying special attention to the cross-cutting elements of partnerships, data and accountability. The strategy consists of efforts to help Member States to apply the global agenda to national and subnational policies, programmes and budgets; to identify synergies and trade-offs across goals to identify and address the main bottlenecks in accelerating progress across multiple Sustainable Development Goals; and to facilitate access to policy advisory support for the United Nations development system. The approach is incorporated within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which serves as the common strategic framework for joint programming by the United Nations country teams. The strategy also entails efforts to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals, support countries' analysis of their own policies and bolster their capacity to review progress. Member States will be kept informed of progress in the implementation of these initiatives in future reports and reporting in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

46. A survey conducted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in programme countries for the quadrennial comprehensive policy review revealed a greater need for the United Nations to mobilize resources to implement the new agenda. The capacity of the United Nations system in that regard may well have a significant impact on the future trajectory of the 2030 Agenda at the country level. The majority of the Governments surveyed expected the United Nations to play a major role in advocating and supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

47. Programme countries responded that the most important priorities for United Nations assistance were in the areas of environment and natural resources (52 per cent); sustainable development policies (47 per cent); agriculture and rural development (44 per cent); economic growth and employment (43 per cent) and health (40 per cent). The results of the survey thus suggested the need to scale up efforts to support programme countries in sustainable development policies.

48. The survey also showed that programme countries continue to prioritize United Nations support and technical cooperation in areas relating to capacity-building for local and national institutions, for statistical data collection and analysis and for joint planning and implementation of programmes through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Self-reported data from United Nations country teams show that, in 2015, 76 per cent of country teams supported the development of national plans, with a focus on the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, the identification of vulnerable groups and the analysis of national status on internationally agreed goals, treaties and standards. The country teams are further supporting national statistical capacity in almost all countries (95 per cent), very often as an inter-agency effort (62 per cent) and with an emphasis on capacity

development (95 per cent). Country teams apply varied collaborative approaches to support government priorities; more than 300 joint programmes cut across the Sustainable Development Goals and more than 200 partnerships with parliaments, civil society, local government, and the private sector were established in 2015 by 132 country teams.

49. The current generation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks initiated in the period 2014-2015 need a more robust scope and understanding of the capacity of the United Nations to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level. To address these concerns, the United Nations Development Group is currently developing a new set of guidelines for the Development Assistance Frameworks that seek to ensure coherent and integrated country-level support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the United Nations development system.

50. Overall, implementing the recommendations of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review will be critical, as improved coordination will further amalgamate the specializations, data, expertise, operational capacities and resources of various organizations and engage entities involved in sustainable development, peacebuilding and humanitarian affairs. At the same time, integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development is more than coordination and refers to truly integrated approaches to policy and capacity development support. Each organization should act with full awareness of the interrelations between its activities and trends and activities in related areas. Member States should continue to lead and guide coordination and integration efforts through the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and undertake reflections in a broad and inclusive manner through the dialogues and functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

51. Many entities started to update their guidance documents in anticipation of the 2030 Agenda so that they would be ready to adjust their strategic plans and results frameworks accordingly. Others are in the process of adapting their strategies, often in consultation with their individual governing bodies. Individual entities are changing their narratives in line with new agendas and outcomes, improving the quality and consistency of communications and using common frameworks for planning, for setting out expected results and for reporting at the global, regional, national and subnational levels.

52. A common vision for the country-level response to crises is needed for the United Nations system as a whole, with the coherence of development and humanitarian planning frameworks as its basis, including humanitarian response plans and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, and taking into account human rights and international humanitarian law concerns, in line with the Human Rights Up Front initiative championed by the Secretary-General.

53. The steps described above will inform the strategic content of the next generation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, "Delivering as one" programmes and broader United Nations engagement at all levels. In that regard, the United Nations system could establish a comprehensive risk analysis and prioritization function and support comprehensive in-country planning and a revised Development Assistance Framework process to make the Development Assistance Framework an adaptable tool that responds to prevention needs and crises, both ongoing and recurrent. Steps taken to operationalize the Secretary-General's Human

Rights Up Front initiative, to work with development actors outside the United Nations system and to enhance national capacity to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by supporting innovative programming for self-reliance would represent a leap forward for integration, ensuring that humanitarian response plans contribute to Development Assistance Framework outcomes, which underpin the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in every country.

VII. Facilitating United Nations system accountability

54. Member States are currently shaping a framework for the follow-up and review of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations system and other development actors are accountable for how they support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A range of intergovernmental bodies, including organs of the United Nations, will be engaged in follow-up and review; the high-level political forum on sustainable development will play a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level.

55. The General Assembly, supported by the Economic and Social Council, is the principal platform for reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the United Nations system. Future quadrennial comprehensive policy reviews of operational activities for development should not only look at how the system works as a whole, but also review its performance in terms of helping Member States with implementation in a holistic way that effectively integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development. This is a major challenge that requires new ways of working and preserving the various elements and overall balance of the 2030 Agenda. The Economic and Social Council will support the General Assembly in that regard through its annual assessment of progress in implementing the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. In that vein, the present report could support such future assessments, together with the report of the Secretary-General on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

56. The recent report of the Secretary-General on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (A/70/684) outlines the main building blocks of the review architecture that are already in place. This architecture will be centred on the high-level political forum, which will facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up. It will promote system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.

57. An inventory compiled by the United Nations system technical support team showed that many intergovernmental bodies and forums review progress and discuss policies in specific areas addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to the functional and regional commissions and their subsidiary bodies, as well as the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, these include intergovernmental bodies supported by the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system (see A/70/684, paragraphs 45-55).

58. The 2030 Agenda can give new impetus to the network of intergovernmental bodies and forums by providing them with opportunities to feature their work prominently at the high-level political forum, without creating a formal reporting

link to the forum or modifying their mandate or governance. All intergovernmental bodies will be invited to contribute to the high-level political forum.

59. The functional and regional commissions, expert bodies and committees of the Economic and Social Council system will contribute to technical and normative guidance for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This will be carried out in a more harmonized and coordinated manner; each body will support the global review functions of the high-level political forum and align its work with the theme of the Council's annual programme of work (see General Assembly resolution 68/1) within its respective mandate. The Council system will be required to increase its horizontal coordination and coherence when addressing all Sustainable Development Goals and submit the results of its work to the high-level political forum.

60. The 2030 Agenda mandated the relevant governing bodies United Nations system organizations to take action to review United Nations system support to implementation and to report on progress and obstacles. It is important that this mandate be followed up in the various executive boards and governing bodies.

VIII. Conclusion and recommendations

61. The work undertaken thus far by the United Nations system underscores the need to further overcome silos and seek new and collaborative approaches to integration inspired and guided by the 2030 Agenda and underpinned by empowered and effective resident coordinators and United Nations country teams that are able to collectively deliver results. All actors should develop a new attitude to achieve collective outcomes, one that takes into account the importance of risk-informed and inclusive processes in addressing the trade-offs required to pursue a holistic approach to integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development within the United Nations system as a whole.

62. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations system must be ready to assist Member States with implementation and effective advancement of integrated approaches. It is suggested that:

(a) The United Nations system organizations and their governing bodies continue to emphasize the use of strategic plans as an effective framework for aligning activities with the 2030 Agenda and internalizing the Sustainable Development Goals into their respective work, as well as for enhancing accountability;

(b) The United Nations system support more holistic approaches to conflict prevention that build resilience through strengthened national capacities that ensure a sustainable development response to crises and conflicts. Organizations should provide more effective support that is grounded in post-conflict and post-crisis risk assessment informed by root causes, structural factors and triggers of conflict that have their origins in economic, social and environmental factors, as well as a vulnerability profile of disaggregated segments of the population, highlighting their capacity to recover and cope;

(c) The United Nations system commit to taking forward a transformative United Nations leadership model and support United Nations leadership development, by connecting field leaders to global knowledge and leadership

learning, drawing on leadership innovations and thinking to better tackle multidimensional challenges and providing opportunities for the next generation of United Nations team leaders;

(d) The United system implement the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, entitled "Towards a risk-informed and integrated approach to sustainable development" as a contribution by the United Nations to a risk-informed and integrated approach to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(e) Member States invite the Secretary-General to report further on progress achieved in mainstreaming the three dimensions of sustainable development in the work of the United Nations system to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, and to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.